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DOÑA AGNES.

A ROMANCE WITHOUT FICTION.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

CHAPTER II.

A DEBT OF HONOR?

"I will stand the hazard of the die."—*King Richard III.*

LONG years had passed since the events occurred which were narrated in the commencement of this story. Francisco was no longer the beneficiary of Don Fuas; "little Agnes" had become Doña Agnes, the accomplished heiress of the De Limas, and Gonzalo was *de facto* the head of the family; his tyrannical temper had not decreased with his years, and the old fidalgo, who had never yielded a point of precedence or dignity to man before, was become the subordinate of his own son—a position of the elders more frequently reached in the new world than the old.

It is the curse of the Peninsula that those of noble birth cannot devote themselves to any useful occupation without, in a measure, losing caste. Gonzalo possessed natural talents which might have secured him fame and happiness in any land where pride of birth was not a bar to enterprise. But unless in attendance on the court, the young nobility of Portugal avoided all occupation—unless the chase, intrigue or gaming might be dignified with that term. Learning was not rendered attractive, and being almost exclusively under the direction of the church, its prosecution was so involved with one or another of the religious orders, and principally the Jesuits, as to hold out but few inducements to a young man of fortune who was unambitious of ecclesiastical honors.

Released from his tutelage, with no intellectual tastes formed, or even inspired, Gonzalo chose his companions from those of similar habits and disposition, dividing his time between dress, play and intrigue. Abroad he was lavish in the expenditure of money, considered even generous, which sufficed to palliate, or rather cause to be overlooked, his haughty temper, which at home was both constantly and offensively exhibited.

* * * * *

In the Rua Esperance, near the junction of the Rua Mercatudo, which slopes in an easterly direction toward the Tagus, there stood in the days of which we speak a public house kept by an Englishman named Orson Nichols, one of that large class of adventurers who, making up their minds to earn a fortune in some foreign land, design to return and enjoy it in that of their

birth and among the associates of their youth; an experiment which too often fails in the last mentioned particular. Among the thousands of fortunes that are gathered by a life of toilsome exile, how few of these voluntary galley slaves to mammon but return, if they return at all, with shattered constitutions and all the monitions of a premature old age—to die at last among hirelings instead of friends, and usually to leave their wealth to some unknown connection or public institution, instead of realizing its anticipated enjoyment among the kindred which they left to seek it.

It was quite the fashion in 17— for enterprising young men in England to go for a term of years into some mercantile house in Portugal as an almost certain means of forming a profitable business connection. The policy of the Portuguese government then offered such advantages to the importers of English goods, that there were few mercantile houses of any note which had not either an English partner in the concern or in which English capital was not invested. It was in Lisbon, some years later, that the poet Southey exiled himself—leaving his newly made wife at the church door, to push his fortunes (which had been but ill rewarded by the muses) under the patronage of his uncle in that city. Since the advent of the French dictator, however, at the close of the last century, essential changes were introduced into the foreign policy of the Peninsula, subsequently diverting English enterprise into widely different channels. But at the time of which we speak an English hotel was a necessity in Lisbon, from the large number of mercantile strangers settled and visiting there. Not a few of these finally became permanently attached to the place, preferring its uniformly mild and salubrious climate to the fogs, damps and variableness of their island home. And to foreigners not burdened with religious scruples, and who were willing to maintain an outward uniformity with the usages of the dominant church, the place had many attractions in addition to its delightful climate. Of this class of money-seekers was Nichols; he had been for many years in the employ of a wine merchant in Lisbon, and had finally established himself in a café, where, combining all the native delicacies with the superior conveniences of an English establishment, his house, in a short time, became the fashionable resort of the young men of wealth and leisure in the city and vicinity.

In accordance with the usual requirements of such a house, but far better arranged than was usual, "mine host" had erected an addition or

wing to the main building, in which were several apartments fitted up with peculiar adaptations for the various kinds of play then and now in vogue upon the continent. On the ground floor was a large room, accessible to all of his customers, who paid a weekly sum for the privilege of entering it at pleasure; and here, there was scarcely an hour out of the twenty-four in which dominoes, dice, cards or some other implement of play were not to be seen in the hands of the young idlers of Lisbon; some frequenters of the room, who had entered it at first as mere lookers on, scarcely ever quitted it save to eat and sleep; mental and physical health was wrecked by a constant repetition of exciting scenes; the entire means of living frequently changed hands in a single night, until with many the passion became a mania, the fascination of which it seemed as impossible for the unassisted individual will to break, as the infatuation of a Bacchanal devotee or the hypochondriac fancies of a monomaniac. City sight-seeing cost as much to the infirm of will in Lisbon in 17— as it does in New York in 1860.

In the upper part of this architectural wing which we have described, were several smaller rooms, devoted to the use of private parties, and to such as did not wish to be recognized there; they were so arranged that they could be entered without the risk of an accidental encounter with the occupants of any other part of the house. In these secluded apartments, occupied by the wealthiest and most aristocratic gamblers, more money was often lost and gained in a single night than in the common room during weeks of play; and not unfrequently was the dice-box or cards made the pretext for private interviews and the planning of secret intrigues; sometimes even political plots were here set on foot which might not safely be broached in a less closely screened and guarded apartment; for, in addition to the care taken to secure unobserved ingress and egress, the walls were of a peculiar construction, intended to deaden the transmission of sound, being interlined with many thicknesses of woollen cloth, and the interstices filled up with ground cork.

One day, toward the close of summer, two young men entered the café by a retired way leading to No. 5, a room to which they were in the habit of resorting, and of which the younger had an annual lease.

Although the stature has gained in altitude, the form in expansion, and the hirsute adornment of the upper lip betokens early manhood, we instantly recognize Gonzalo de Lima as one of

this hopeful pair; the other, whom we shall call Narcisus, a few years his senior, and one of the most accomplished gamblers in Lisbon, possessing a set of regular and handsome features, he was, when in a good humor, considered a very agreeable person; but on this day his countenance wore an uneasy look, which he vainly strove to conceal under a mask of gaiety; for he had lately become deeply involved by repeated and heavy losses at the gaming table, and he had now an object to accomplish of vital consequence to his fortunes. Under the *brusque* air which he assumed, lay the fixed determination to retrieve his recent losses by one of two means—either to win from Gonzalo enough to release the mortgage on his estate, or to secure from him, as a more permanent resource, the promise of his sister's hand—whose dowry he knew would more than cover all his debts. Carefully concealing his pecuniary embarrassment, and being plentifully supplied with gold for the occasion by his very disinterested friends, the Jews, and all the while declaring that "he really had no mind for play that morning," he commenced and skillfully drew Gonzalo on to begin a game of dice. The ivory once tabled, he rang for wine, and rapidly poured out one glassful after another for his friend, while he carelessly consented to "make a throw or two for the value of a *cruzado*." But though apparently so indifferent, fortune seemed at his command; he won at almost every throw, until Gonzalo, unused to such continued ill luck, began to show symptoms of irritation; once or twice he recovered some ground, then lost again, until thoroughly angered and excited, he declared his determination to win back the whole of what Narcisus had gained, or to throw his last *moeda* on the board.

Narcisus perceived with joy the reckless desperation which was seizing his victim, and growing cooler as Gonzalo's excitement increased, he felt already sure of his purposed object. He saw that the hot-tempered youth would hesitate at nothing while under the demoniac spell which was upon him. On the proposal of the twentieth stake the heir of De Lima pledged his last scrap of personal property—a diamond ring, given him by the beautiful Countess of Tavora. And here we must diverge a moment from the direct course of our story to explain the peculiar value attaching to this unlooked for stake.

The Countess of Tavora was a young widow whose immense wealth had originally attracted the attentions of Gonzalo, but whose amiable disposition, brilliant and acute mind had finally won the most fervid devotion of which his mind was

capable. Indeed, when in her presence, the whole man seemed changed; his impetuosity was transmuted into respectful admiration, his haughty, overbearing demeanor became patient humility; the turbulence of his passions appeared sanctified rather than excited—as a patron saint, tabernacled in flesh, did he regard her rather than as an ordinary woman to be wooed and won by ordinary attentions. This reverend love of Gonzalo's for the pure and beautiful countess was a striking evidence of the power of attraction in opposites, for without possessing a single virtue of mind or heart like hers, he still worshipped the goodness he never dreamed of imitating; but when removed from the immediate influence of her presence his malignant nature resumed its ascendancy, forgetful of the magnetic talisman which would have gently led him to the patient virtues, had reflection been allowed to curb his undisciplined impulses. Nor, though immeasurably his superior, had the young countess been altogether indifferent to his constant and sincere devotion; but had she been prepared to express a definite preference, other circumstances led her to act with guarded reserve. The guardianship of that portion of her estate which she derived from the late count, had been intrusted to the care of certain ecclesiastics, who had thenceforward expended all their powers of logic and persuasion to induce the young widow to secure her own eternal happiness by dedicating herself (with the aforesaid property) to a "religious" life—the technical religious life of the cloister; and the probability seemed to be, that if she positively and finally refused, she would eventually lose the greater part of her revenue. She, therefore, prudently avoided promises to either party, and after three years of unremitting attention, the only favor Gonzalo had yet obtained, was the permission to exchange rings with his senhora, unaccompanied by any pledge for the future—and this was the precious jewel which, had he been himself, he would never thus have risked; but wine and the maddening dice had made him incapable of reflection, and for the moment heedless of consequences.

With the recklessness of which habitual gamblers alone can conceive, he had drawn the precious ring from his finger, and placed the glitter-stake before Narcisus, scarcely realizing what he had done, but as he saw his false friend reach out his hand as if to take and examine it, his heart burned and his face flushed with the thought that any other should touch that sacred memento. Involuntarily tightening his grasp

upon it, he said, with but an ill-assumed carelessness: "The ring is worth treble the sum you have placed there; I am not a Jew that you need to test if it be genuine—if you win it, it is yours, but if you do not neither shall you touch it."

Narcisus looked at him with surprise, and would have asked an explanation of this apparently uncourteous whim, but secure in Gonzalo's word, and intent on his own schemes, he pursued his curiosity no further, and thought of the incident only as every keen-eyed gamester notes the slightest incident, to see if it can in any way be turned to his own advantage, and without reply prepared for the next throw.

Some fatal presumption had induced Gonzalo to feel that his cherished jewel was invulnerable—that it could not be won from him. He was mistaken. Narcisus was again the winner, and with a smile of triumph now held out his hand for the ring; but a glance at the swollen and contorted face of his antagonist instantly convinced him that there was some deeper passion at work in the heart of the young man than mere vexation at any amount of pecuniary loss. Indeed, the struggle going on in Gonzalo's mind actually disfigured him, so that his countenance, to one who had looked upon it only in his calmer moods, would hardly have recognized him. His honor was at stake—how could he withhold the jewel—and yet how could he part with that which he could not help regarding as the token of all his future happiness. He still retained it firmly in his hand, which was, however, mechanically outstretched toward Narcisus, who would certainly have taken it, had he not been closely scrutinizing the face before him, with its unmistakable indices of internal torture.

In less time than it has taken us to describe the scene, Gonzalo recovered himself sufficiently to think of an expedient.

"Narcisus," he said, "this ring is yours—yet, if it please you, *one stake more!*"

Within the few seconds which had elapsed, though, in their torture, they had seemed hours to Gonzalo, he had hastily resolved on his plan, and he now, believing that it would be eagerly accepted, shamelessly proposed it—one stake more—it was *his sister's hand*.

O Love, strange are thy works! To avoid risking the favor of his adored countess, Gonzalo was ready to sacrifice the life-long happiness of his young, innocent, and till now, happy sister.

"One stake more, Narcisus! Doña Agnes' hand;—do you accept?"

Skilled as he was in the management of his

features, the accomplished schemer could not quite conceal his pleasure at this hoped for, yet hardly expected proposal. His eyes flashed with delight as he exclaimed :

"Do I understand you? I win and that toy remains yours, and the Senhora Agnes is mine—you win, and you still keep the jewel, while I have no recompense—the stake is a tempting one, and though you are *sure* to gain, my venture is not too much for the prize you offer."

"Agnes will accept you at my word," said Gonzalo, "and as I have no other pledge to offer, here is my hand to the promise—I swear to you it shall be fulfilled on the honor of a fidalgo."

Narcisus once more emptied the dice-box—Gonzalo followed and again lost. "I give you joy of your ring," exclaimed Narcisus, springing to his feet, "but a fairer jewel is mine. Come and let us take a parting glass to the health of my *senhora*, *Dona Agnes*."

A few moments later and the two separated to go to their several homes. Gonzalo to watch against any intervening obstacle to the fulfillment of his promise, and Narcisus exulting in the pleasing visions which this alliance opened up to him—particularly in relieving him from certain onerous conditions he had entered into with the money-lenders, who would now be content to wait a little longer for payment, since their debtor had so fair a prospect of rendering them a liberal interest at last.

CHAPTER III.

FRANCISCO VIEIRA.

"I was a child and she was a child
In this kingdom by the sea;
But our love it was stronger by far
Than the love of many far older than we;
Of many far wiser than we:
* * * * *
So that the angels in Heaven above
Went envying her and me."

On the very day and hour in which this infernal bargain was concluded between Gonzalo and Narcisus, a vessel of the royal fleet might have been seen approaching the coast of Lusitania. On board was the Marquis of Abrantes, late ambassador of his majesty to Pope Clement XI. With the natural impatience of voyagers as they approach their destined haven, the few passengers who had accompanied the marquis from Rome, came upon deck on the first appearance of land, watching, as homeward-bound travellers always watch, for well known objects along the shore; while they strain their eyes in the direction of their several homes, as if that would bring

them nearer with more certain safety and greater speed.

In addition to his secretary, page and servants, the marquis was accompanied by a young man, who could scarcely be twenty years of age, and who yet seemed to occupy the attitude of familiar friendship with him. He was evidently no employé of the ambassador's, for he received from him no commands and proffered to him no service—save such as any gentleman might offer to another. The youth was of slight, though symmetrical figure, and had the black, penetrating eye, characteristic of the natives of Portugal, and corresponding national features, except that the forehead was unusually expansive; his rich complexion, the gift only of the south wind

Which tints the cheek
With a color of romance,

was heightened just now by his exposure on the voyage; the expression of the whole countenance was exceedingly pleasing when in conversation; and when he smiled, it was as if Nature herself smiled, the visible emotion seemed so whole-hearted and harmonious. Yet, watching him in his thoughtful moods, there might have been detected in the firmness of the set lips, and the energetic contour of the square chin, a power of will, which, if once aroused, could neither be persuaded nor coerced, but would inevitably fulfill its elected purposes. Just now, his frequent movements, and the quickly changing thoughts, mirroring themselves in his face, show plainly the deep and varying emotions which are stirred within him at the sight of his native shores.

Passing the Berling Rocks, which are the first legible guide posts of the sea, and pointing toward the mouth of the Tagus; then bringing in sight the wooded heights of Mafra and Cintra, the latter crowned with the picturesque Penha Convent, the city of Lisbon itself could be discerned, but still far in the distance. Flocks of sea-birds hovered over the bay-like mouth of the river, and the white spray of the breakers on the northern shore added a perilous animation to the scene.

The young man seemed never tired of gazing, and every now and then, as the good ship's progress brought into view some peculiarly striking aspect of sea or shore, he would quickly seize his pencil and strive to convey to the pages of his portfolio the evanescent visions of beauty through which he was passing. As twilight approached, the cheering light from *Nossa Senhora de Guia* shed its beneficent radiance over the water, seeming to beckon our travellers onward to home and rest. The marquis' protégé must

have been something of a poet, too, for no sooner did the watch-fire from this well-known beacon flash upon them over the sea, than, taking from the little page his guitar, he improvised the following lines, accompanying them with a rich and melodious voice, such as only southern Europe has as yet furnished to the world.

Now was the time when in the skies,
Night should have shown her starry eyes;
But those bright orbs above were shrouded,
And heaven was dark and overclouded.
But now the beacon we espied—
Our blessed Lady of the Guide;
And there propitious rose her light,
The never failing star of night.
The seaman on his weary way,
Beholds with joy the saving ray,
And steers his vessel from afar
In safety o'er the dangerous bar.
A holy impulse of delight
Possess'd us at that well-known sight;
And in one feeling all allied,
We blessed *Our Lady of the Guide*.
"Star of the sea, all hail!" we sung,
And praised her with one heart and tongue;
And on that dark and silent sea
Chanted *Our Lady's Litany*.

By the time his song was ended their voyaging was also done for the day—the sky was indeed a little overclouded, and the cautious captain, though so near the city, determined to anchor in the stream, and the impatient travellers must spend another night on shipboard.

The approach to Lisbon affords one of the most beautiful views of any port in western Europe. The river Tagus runs between high hills, rich in the variegated beauty of "grey olive yards, green orange groves, and greener vineyards," the shore growing populous with every moment's advance; convents and *quintas*—the name for large private gardens or villas—ornament every hill-side, the buildings increasing in architectural beauty as the city is neared; the river, of as bright a blue as the heavens above it, is covered with boats of every size and form, rigged with sails of curious and unimaginable shapes, and of varying colors; while the boatmen, in their pendent red caps, bright blue waistcoats and short white trowsers, add a piquant brilliancy to the scene. The city of Lisbon, covering its seven hills like Rome, also stretches along the shore as far as the eye can reach, while the castle of Almada overlooks it like a watch-tower from the opposite eminence.

It was under the bright sun of the succeeding morning that our travellers were finally landed at the quay; and before another twilight came,

the young stranger had made his way to the *Quinta da Luz*, or Garden of Almonds, the summer residence of the De Lima family. He had brought with him from Rome many relics of the saints, and many precious gems of art, as propitiatory gifts to his old benefactors, Don Fuas and Doña Isabella. There was a vial containing a single precious drop of the blood of St. Januarius; a few shreds of the cloak of St. James of Seville, in which he had floated from Algiers to Spain, safely and dry as in the most perfect boat; a sealed box, said to contain one of the roses which suddenly bloomed in the lap of St. Elizabeth of Hungary while distributing bread to the poor, with many others of equal if not superior value; not forgetting, of course, a piece of the true cross and a strip of the Virgin's veil. As the young traveller opened out these, and many other treasures which, in our day, would have had a higher marketable value, such as cameos, gems, ancient coins, and so forth, he did not forget to place among them the first class medal for drawing which had been awarded him in the great art-focus of the world, imperial Rome. Nor could a spectator fail to perceive that, though laying all his treasures before Don Fuas and his lady, that his quick, glancing eye constantly sought out the fair face of Doña Agnes, striving to find there some indication of pleasure and approval. Nor had years obliterated a certain unmistakable identity between the full-grown, self-possessed and somewhat reserved young lady before him, with the romping, fearless, affectionate little girl who had so artlessly bestowed upon him showers of farewell kisses when he went away.

During all the years of his long and honorable exile, as the protégé of the Marquis of Abrantes, and successively the pupil of Lutti and Trevisani in Rome, he has never forgotten the fidalgo's daughter, and while pursuing with the utmost diligence his favorite art, he has not forgotten his early dreams, and still looks for the hand of Agnes, as his highest and final reward. Francisco Vieira, for he can be no other, is not willing to remain long in doubt whether these cherished visions are to become like

The baseless fabric of a dream,

or whether they shall receive a blessed confirmation from the constant subject of them. He will instantly test her remembrance and fidelity. Carelessly placing a small white shell among the heaped treasures which had already been thoroughly examined by the senior members of the family, he turned to the young senhora and said:

"Will not Doña Agnes deign to select something from among my gifts?"

A permissive nod from her lady mother, and Agnes was soon turning over the mixed heap of jewels and superstitious rubbish—her eye almost instantly fell on the little white shell. Neglecting all the princely gems and the priceless relics of saving virtue collected there, with a hasty glance of intelligent recognition at the earnest and handsome face which was also bending over her and them, her hand closed upon the most precious souvenir she could see—a small, white token, once taken from the broad basin of her father's fountain. Then turning slightly to avoid observation, she touched a spring in the broad jewelled handle of her fan, and quickly laid its mate in Francisco's hand.

His object for that day was accomplished; his child-love had recognized the tie as still binding, and he was happy. Proud and happy, for he knew that his fame had come before him. It was not alone that success had crowned the labors of his pencil, and that comparative wealth was certainly within his reach, but that young as he was, he was already selected for eminent distinction at his native court. John V. was re-decorating the royal palace at Mafra, and he had desired the Marquis of Abrantes to send him speedily, or bring with him, Francisco Vieira, the young artist, of whom all his court were talking as the fittest person to furnish the principal designs.

Is it wonderful, then, that the young lover approached the mansion of his earliest patron with something akin to confidence—that he passed under the sculptured arms upon the arched gateway without a feeling of inferiority—that he dared, with the ardent hopefulness of youth and prosperity, to anticipate a blissful fulfillment of his golden dreams?

(To be continued.)

NONE but smatterers in Art ever estimate the value of a work by the rule of its dimensions; the man of true taste only looks at the mind displayed in the production, not at the extent of surface over which its result may be diffused. The feeling which induces the pretender to taste to slight the genius embodied within the small compass of the antique gem, merely on account of its minuteness, is the same in its nature as that which has prompted all races, as well at the dawn as at the decline of the fine arts, to erect monuments which aim at producing effect by their magnitude alone. Pausanias observes satirically that "only Romans and Rhodians pride themselves upon the possession of colossi," whilst the masterpieces of Greek skill rarely exceeded the size of life.—*King.*

THE WATER SUPPLY OF ROME IN TRAJAN'S TIME.

Translated by THEODORE WESTOFF, from a report made by the "Prefect of the Seine," G. E. HAUSSMANN, to the Municipal Board of Paris, July, 1858.

To secure an abundance of pure water, and to distribute it with regularity and constancy through all the quarters of a large city, has ever been esteemed of the utmost consequence, and works, therefore, constructed for this purpose, have justly been regarded as among the most important acts of illustrious rulers, and invariably hold a lasting place in the gratitude of mankind.

The foundations of nearly every great city have been commenced on the banks of some river, the first inhabitants supplying themselves from the stream; but as population has increased, people have been forced to build their houses away from the shore, and finding no good water in their neighborhood without sinking wells, they have been obliged to use these, readily reaching the subterranean sheet a few feet below the surface, water in most cases distributing itself freely through valleys and low grounds; the city, however, continuing to expand, and the inhabitants compelled to locate on higher grounds, obstacles presented themselves in boring to a water-bed at such an increased depth, and it being discovered, too, that a dense population, by the unavoidable accumulation of refuse about their closely packed dwellings, spoiled the wells, and even tainted the stream, the necessity of conducting the neighboring springs and brooks into the city became apparent; and so, as this want increased, the more remote streams. Such has been the common experience of the oldest and most celebrated towns.

Without stopping to notice the aqueducts in Egypt, Palestine and Greece, that have been recorded and described by historians, the remains of which, in numerous instances, are still to be seen, I cannot silently pass over the great works of this nature which have been carried out by the enterprise of the Romans.

Through Europe, and parts of Asia and Africa, are these aqueducts scattered; some yet standing, despite the shocks and changes of many centuries, still supplying with unfailing constancy the grateful abundance of their waters to all their old localities. Others, in various countries, are now nothing more than sublime ruins, their majestic proportions and imperishable remains serving but to record the grandeur of the people who constructed them.

If we may judge the perfection of a nation's refinement by the varied, liberal and luxurious